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HUNGER OFFICER BACKS DEFENSE REVIEW CALL

NEW YORK -- An interreligious call for independent analysis of defense spending in the U.S. is winning support from Episcopal Church officials.

Bread for the World began the effort late last year with a call from its board of directors for such an analysis. The statement expressed alarm that "spending for armaments is rising sharply despite mounting hunger worldwide and the prospect of budget cuts that could mean both a continuing decline in the share of U.S. aid for the poor abroad and bare cupboards for people in our own country."

The analysis that Bread for the World seeks would look for waste in military spending, but would also examine the nature and extent of the Soviet threat, measured against the Soviet Union's own security needs, and the appropriateness of U.S. responses to that threat. In that connection the study should, according to Bread for the World, assess the cost and benefit of specific weapons programs and the suitability of force as a response in various situations.

In a recent statement, Dr. David Crean, hunger staff officer at the Episcopal Church Center, supported the move, noting that "there is, perhaps, no more emotional debate than that on national security."

Crean said: "It is unfortunate that many people make a facile connection between security and armaments. Certainly a level of military preparedness has been shown historically to be necessary for survival in the face of powerful adversaries. The question is, what constitutes enough?"

"The governments of the world currently spend an estimated \$450 billion a year on armaments... So the argument really is, what constitutes material security for the Christian? Has the annual expenditure of \$450 billion on arms made the world secure?"

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"...At best we have a precarious kind of balance which contributes to world peace -- the kind enjoyed by Europe between 1870 and 1914.

"What then constitutes security? Jack Nelson in his book, Hunger For Justice, notes that, 'As sons and daughters of God we know that our security is ultimately linked to faith and justice. If our confidence in weapons systems makes us indifferent to injustice, we are likely to be insensitive to the word of God in our time.' "

Crean asked: "What is injustice? A child going blind for lack of vitamin A. A mother trudging five miles to fetch water because there is none in the village. Children with diarrhea because of a lack of clean water. A screaming, naked teenager running from a napalm attack. Four hundred and fifty billion dollars for the pursuit of a chimerical national security."

Arthur Simon, executive director of Bread for the World, said that he thought it would be sufficient for the chairmen of either the House or the Senate budget committee to request such a study from the Government Accounting Office. "Letters to members of Congress should ask them to approach the budget committee chairmen on this matter," said Simon.

"As a step that seeks to cut waste in government spending and seeks also a defense posture more adequately geared to real security needs, the request is one that should appeal to conservatives and liberals alike," Simon added.

In a separate but related move, Bread for the World announced that in late February a "Hunger and Global Security Bill" it has been drafting would be introduced in Congress.

Bread for the World is a church-related movement on hunger whose membership spans the Christian spectrum. Its president is Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton of Detroit, and its vice president is Arie R. Brouwer, General Secretary of the Reformed Church in America.

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